Rento Fortune

By LAN GANES LTD

Chapter 1

Snow fell like ash over the slums of Lower Magnitogorsk. Each flake dissolved against the rusted iron of bent smokestacks and the weather-warped cement slabs of a city no longer called by name. The People's Republic no longer named streets. Maps were banned. Locations were described in relation to statues of Kim Jong Un—there were 43 in Magnitogorsk alone.

Johnathan Rento, known to no one but himself as *John*, trudged through knee-deep snow with a coil of industrial wire slung over his back. He wore state-issued boots with holes punched through the soles and wrapped in plastic bags. The wind made a sound like dying animals.

John worked for the National Utilities Office, District C—a man whose hands had blistered into new skin years ago. He had a job no one wanted: crawling through manholes to replace rotting copper or climbing telephone poles made of rotted birch to reroute power stolen by the Party's elite. His role was labeled *Worker, Conductive Tier 4*. Tier 5 was retirement. Retirement was a shallow grave behind the incinerator.

The day's job was to restore power to one of the ministry propaganda stations that broadcast Kim Jong Un's speeches in a loop. The issue had been a snow-buckled antenna cable. John repaired it in silence. No one thanked him. No one was allowed to speak to Tier 4s.

At the checkpoint gate, he scanned his ration tag—his wages: 6 rice credits, 2 cloth tokens, and one housing ticket. Rent for his concrete room was 5 rice credits per week. The math, as always, was impossible. Yet he lived.

He slept on the top floor of a crumbling apartment complex with no elevator. His room had one lightbulb, no socket. He read nothing. He had no books. His walls were papered with brown ration stamps. The wind spoke more often than his neighbors. His best friend was a mouse who never showed its face.

And still, something inside him burned.

On the third day of the month, something changed.

It was the kind of day that came once in a decade—when the clouds cracked just enough to let a strip of dull gold shine through like an omen. The kind of day that made people wonder if it meant something.

John was passing through the West Trading Annex, where government auctions were held for condemned land—plots the state had no interest in rebuilding. Usually, such auctions were stage-managed and pre-rigged for party officials. But today, due to a clerical error, two plots had been opened to *civilians*.

"District lots 003-B (Sudan) and 003-C (Libya)," the soldier called, reading from a slip. "Low-demand zone. Uninhabitable. No functional plumbing. 20 rubles each."

Sudan and Libya were not the real countries, of course—only names borrowed from a banned board game long buried in black markets. Children called the properties "the cursed twins." They sat beside a failed fertilizer plant, hemmed in by two crumbling smokestacks. Even stray dogs avoided them.

John reached into his coat and pulled out a crumpled envelope he'd been hiding for years: his emergency fund. Forty-three rubles.

"Two lots," John said quietly. "I'll take both."

The soldier blinked. "You sure?"

John nodded. "I know what I'm doing."

That evening, he stood at the edge of Sudan, boots deep in blackened snow. The land smelled of ammonia and sorrow. Rusted barrels littered the field like fallen soldiers. And yet... it was his. Two connected plots. A color set.

For the first time in his life, John owned land. Not one lot, but a *pair*—adjacent, unified, ready. No one in his family had ever owned anything. His grandfather died as a tenant miner. His father vanished into the state textile plant, unpaid. But John... he had bought land.

He could see it already. One house on each. Maybe more. Color-coded. Managed. Connected. A *set*.

He laughed once, sharp and short. Then he threw his arms up to the bruised, blood-colored sky.

"Rento Fortune!" he shouted, voice cracking like a matchstrike against frostbitten air.

His breath bloomed before him like smoke from a burning future.

Chapter 2

The next morning, John withdrew every ruble he had from the People's Bank of Regional Prosperity. The teller—a wax-faced old man with a faded Party pin—didn't question him. They never did. To question was to invite paperwork, and paperwork invited inspection, and inspection invited disappearance.

John walked away with 73 rubles in paper bills and a small sack of copper tokens. It was more money than a Tier 4 was allowed to legally possess, but he had hidden the extra wages from off-the-books repairs: rewiring the Chief Regulator's sauna, salvaging copper from old tank husks, flipping meters back before inspections.

It had taken him years. It took him five minutes to spend.

He bought timber from a man whose wagon was pulled by a one-eyed mule. He bought bricks from a crumbling factory just past the canal, where workers coughed red into their gloves and were paid in vodka. Nails were rare—he traded three sets of state socks for two boxes. For roofing, he bartered half his ration tokens for warped tin sheets and tar-soaked cloth.

By nightfall, the land was no longer silent.

He recruited workers not with pay, but with loyalty. These were the men who'd worked alongside him at the utility station—silent, skeletal, weatherbeaten. No one had ever asked them for help. So when John appeared in their doorways at dawn with nothing but a coiled length of wire in one hand and purpose in the other, they followed.

They didn't speak. They didn't need to.

The whip was not symbolic. John had found it in the debris behind a condemned stable. He never struck skin—but he cracked it through the air like a gunshot whenever someone slowed or sagged. It wasn't cruelty. It was momentum.

"Move like you mean it."

"Stack the bricks like they're yours."

"You want to die in a bunk bed with rats, or under a roof you built?"

Crack.

They didn't call him a foreman. They called him *Rento*. A joke at first. Then it stuck.

In two weeks, the hotel had bones: a skeletal frame of crooked wood and patched tin. Then came walls—cheap, but sturdy. Windows were old bus glass scavenged from the depot. Doors came from abandoned offices, ripped from rusted hinges and rehinged with bent forks. Every corner of the hotel bore fingerprints of desperation and ingenuity.

One of the workers, a young man named Grisha, hung a curtain made from stitched-together uniforms. Another, Anton, fashioned a crude fireplace from two barrels and a chimney pipe. In the lobby, John nailed a wooden plank over a desk.

He carved the words by hand with a screwdriver:

RENTOPLEX LODGING EST. 1953

A lie. It was 1955. But legacy had to start somewhere.

The night before opening, John stood outside the hotel and looked up at it with swollen eyes. It was ugly. Crooked. A monstrosity of wood, rust, and patched-together materials.

But it was *real*. It stood. Against gravity, against logic, against regime.

Grisha brought out a cracked mirror, hung it by the door.

"You should see yourself," he said. "You look like a man now."

John smiled and let the whip fall from his hands.

The first guest arrived on a Friday.

She walked through the falling snow like she didn't feel cold. She wore a coat made of something foreign—smooth and brown, like lacquered leather. Her face was pale but alert, her eyes a strange, deep green. Most people in the city looked at the ground. She looked straight ahead. She walked like a person who'd chosen to be here.

"Room?" she asked at the desk.

John blinked. "Y-yes."

He handed her a paper key—a scrap of card with the number 3 scrawled in pencil.

She nodded once, then climbed the stairs without another word.

John watched her go, his breath caught somewhere between lungs and throat.

He didn’t know her name.

He didn’t know yet that he would.

Chapter 3

There are tunnels beneath the city.

Old ones. Forgotten ones. Built during the war before the last one, when the Soviet regime feared American bombers and built sanctuaries beneath factories, beneath rail lines, beneath homes that no longer existed. Most were collapsed, sealed, or flooded.

But one still breathed.

A rusted hatch beneath a manhole led to a low concrete corridor, barely tall enough for a man to crawl through. Rats avoided it. Dogs barked at its scent and turned away. Inside, four shadows moved in precision silence.

The team was known only by codenames.

Skipper. Kowalski. Rico. Private.

They were penguins. But no one who saw them would describe them that way. They were operatives. Specialists. Black-and-white ghosts in the regime's underbelly. None of them knew how they got here. They had always been here. The mission came first.

"All right, boys," Skipper whispered, rolling a crude paper map across the rusted steel of their operations desk. "Intel confirms Supreme Leader Kim is holed up in Sector 9, the Kremlin-style tower near the opera house that no one sings in. Surveillance says he never leaves the top floor. Classic dictator move."

"Sir," said Kowalski, eyes narrowed behind a pair of cracked lenses. "Security layout is nontrivial. Forty-five guards minimum. One railgun emplacement. Thermal detectors. Automated confession booths."

"Rico?" Skipper turned.

Rico burped up a satchel charge, a pair of pliers, and a half-eaten cigarette. He saluted, then swallowed the charge again for safekeeping.

"Excellent," Skipper nodded. "Love the enthusiasm."

Private, smaller than the others, looked up from his perch on a busted typewriter. His voice was quieter. "What if… what if we don't make it back, Skipper?"

Skipper didn't blink. "Then we die doing what we were hatched to do: bringing justice to tyrants."

The penguins had been tracking Kim Jong Un for months. The mission file—codenamed *Red Glacier*—had started when the dictator began sending encrypted weather balloons across European borders. The penguins decrypted them. The messages were coordinates. Each one pointed to remote Russian facilities—radio towers, weapons stockpiles, and hydroelectric dams. The balloons were instructions for operatives across the state to prepare something called *Phase Borealis.*

Kowalski's analysis suggested it was a long-range atmospheric weapon. Its test site? Right beneath the city.

Operation Red Glacier was no longer a recon mission. It was an assassination.

On the night of the strike, the team emerged through a sewer grate disguised as a Lenin bust. The streets above were quiet—curfew made sure of that. The only movement came from the sweep of automated floodlights and the distant sound of propaganda broadcasts echoing like cathedral bells.

"Approach low. Stay frosty," Skipper whispered, sliding through shadow like an oil spill.

They crossed rooftops in silence, bypassed two patrols, and disabled a sentry bot with an improvised EMP built from a toaster and a jar of pickles. At the base of the Sector 9 tower, Rico regurgitated a grappling hook. They ascended the wall using industrial wire and adrenaline.

They reached the ventilation duct of the top floor in under four minutes.

Inside: a throne room.

No tapestries. No banners. Just metal. Cold, sterile, humming with control. And at the center, behind a desk made of glass and bones, sat Kim Jong Un.

He wore no military uniform. Just a long grey coat. His eyes were small and glassy, but aware. He looked up before they entered.

"I knew you'd come," he said, voice thick with boredom. "The penguins."

Skipper stepped forward. "Kim Jong Un. You're under arrest for crimes against birdkind—and humanity."

Kim chuckled. "Do you really think four penguins can take down the state?"

Kowalski muttered, “It’s not the first time.”

The lights flickered. An alarm began to rise.

Rico exploded through the ductwork with a high-pitched screech, spitting shrapnel and chaos. Private dove beneath the desk and short-circuited the power grid. Skipper vaulted onto Kim’s desk with military grace, pointing a makeshift stun blaster made from a coil gun and dental floss.

But Kim was faster than they’d anticipated. He slammed a fist on a hidden switch.

The floor split open.

Everything vanished into darkness.

They landed hard. A sub-basement. Metal walls. Magnetic locks. Kim stood above them on a catwalk, laughing—not madly, but clinically.

“You’ve failed,” he said. “You’re not part of the system. You’re an anomaly. A joke.”

Skipper stood. Blood in his beak. Pride in his spine.

“Then here’s the punchline,” he said.

And Rico blew the floor.

Somewhere in the smoke and confusion, Kim escaped.

But the tower didn’t.

The explosion was muffled, distant—no civilians harmed. Just steel and glass, now buried under ash and concrete. The mission wasn’t complete. But it was a message.

The penguins returned to the tunnels. Weakened. Wounded. But alive.

“Phase Borealis is delayed,” said Kowalski. “For now.”

“Kim won’t take this lying down,” said Private.

“I hope he doesn’t,” Skipper replied, dragging a cracked monitor across the floor. “Because next time... we’re not playing nice.”

Rico coughed up a tooth.

They all stared at it in silence.

Chapter 4

The Rentoplex was humming with its usual creaks and groans. The patched wooden floorboards warped and shifted beneath worn boots and hurried footsteps. The faint smell of tar and fresh paint lingered in the air, mingling with the cold breath of the winter night. John sat behind the rough-hewn desk, polishing a chipped brass bell, watching the stairwell.

Timmy Monopoly arrived just as the dim hallway light flickered, his expression serious beneath a mop of unruly hair. Timmy was a man who could talk for hours without saying anything—and sometimes that was exactly what he wanted. His loyalty to John was as much habit as it was belief. Yet, behind his easy smile and endless chatter, there was a restless gleam—a spark of something else. An ambition, unspoken and unknown to all but the coldest walls and the audience's distant suspicion.

"John," Timmy said, settling into the one chair by the desk. "The guests will be arriving soon. But have you heard the news? The Party's tightening the noose. Something's coming."

John nodded absently, eyes fixed on the stairwell.

Jane appeared then—her coat pulled tight against the cold, green eyes shining with quiet fire. She moved through the lobby with grace, almost as if the crooked walls bent to make room for her.

"Good evening," Jane said softly, setting a small bag on the counter. "Room three has been very comfortable, thank you."

John smiled for the first time in days.

They sat by the single window, watching snow fall against the fractured cityscape.

Jane's voice lowered, conspiratorial but hopeful. "I have a plan. To give people something the Party can't control: safe, free internet."

John blinked. "Safe internet? In this city?"

She nodded. "Not just safe, *private*. Free access to information without surveillance. I call it... 'The Network of Shadows.' But friends call me 'Jane Google.'"

Jane reached into her bag and pulled out a thin booklet, its cover emblazoned with a shark logo.

"It's possible thanks to Surfshark VPN," she said, eyes bright. "It's the only way to guarantee your connection stays encrypted—keeping your searches, your messages, your life hidden from

prying eyes. It’s easy to use, affordable, and reliable even here, where the regime tries to watch every keystroke.”

John listened, rapt.

“If people can connect safely, share truth, organize... maybe this place can change.”

Jane smiled. “And maybe that change starts with me—and with you.”

Surfshark VPN is the digital shield for those who dare to seek freedom in a world of surveillance. Whether you’re hiding your browsing from the regime or accessing blocked sites, Surfshark’s military-grade encryption ensures your data stays private. It’s simple, fast, and offers unlimited device connections. For anyone in a city like ours, it’s not just a tool — it’s a lifeline.

Timmy shifted in his chair, eyes gleaming. He smiled, but it didn’t reach his gaze.

“Sounds like a noble cause, Jane,” he said. “The world needs more people like you.”

But beneath the surface, Timmy’s mind raced. He had his own plans—plans to reshape not just this city, but the entire nation, the entire globe. Allies yet unknown, named only in hushed tones—SpongeBob, Rick, Morty. The pieces were moving. The game was set.

For now, though, the hotel was their shelter. Their hope.

John took Jane’s hand in his.

“Rento Fortune,” he whispered again. But this time it meant something new.

Chapter 5

John stood on the cracked asphalt of his newest property, the blue lot named Libya. The first hotel, Rentoplex, was behind him—a testament to grit, desperation, and the faint glow of hope in a city that knew none. The second hotel was just a skeleton of beams and tarps, but it was growing, piece by piece.

The cold bit into his fingers as he hammered a crooked plank into place. His breath hung in the air, a fragile cloud that dissolved into the gray sky.

He dreamed now—not just of blue lots on the forgotten edges, but of the red properties: Qatar and China. The two jewels of the city, shining in the state registry as the most valuable plots in Magnitogorsk.

They were out of reach.

Prices soared beyond reason—thousands of rubles, an obscene sum. The kind only the Party elite or mysterious benefactors could afford. But John believed that if he could finish his second hotel, build it bigger and better, the profits might just save the day. Capitalism—no matter how twisted or forbidden—could be the key.

“John,” Timmy said, stepping beside him, “we can’t ignore the auction next week. The Vatican’s up for grabs.”

John blinked. “The Vatican? In Russia?”

Timmy smiled thinly. “It’s a codename for the state’s archival fortress. Political power lies in what’s inside those walls. History, secrets... control. If we buy it, we control the past.”

John’s eyes narrowed. “That’s a lot of rubles.”

Timmy shrugged. “So is ambition.”

Days later, as workers hammered and sawed at the second hotel, John’s mind drifted to the auction house. A cold building where whispers traded hands like currency. He imagined the

bidding wars—tyrants against tycoons, shadows against shadows. He would need every ruble, every favor.

The second hotel rose like a promise—this one with rougher walls but higher ceilings, more windows patched with translucent plastic. It was an act of defiance, a signal that Rento Fortune was not finished.

One evening, after John had gone out to prepare for the auction, Timmy sat alone in the Rentoplex lobby, the whip resting beside him like a forgotten ghost.

The air was thick with silence.

Then the phone rang.

Timmy answered it without hesitation.

“Rick? Morty?” His voice lowered.

There was no laughter on the other end. No jokes.

“Plans are accelerating,” said Rick’s voice, harsh and clipped. “You need to be ready.”

Morty’s voice followed, tremulous and urgent. “We don’t have much time, Timmy. The stakes are higher than ever.”

Timmy’s eyes gleamed in the dim light.

“I’m ready,” he said. “I’ve never been more ready.”

The call ended.

The game was moving faster.

Chapter 6

Under the sickly glow of a cracked streetlamp, the penguins huddled near the corner of Rentoplex's second hotel, their black-and-white forms blending into the night. Skipper's sharp eyes scanned the building's uneven windows, calculating.

"Target acquired," he muttered. "Jane Google. Her activity has spiked. She's key to this network the regime fears."

Kowalski tapped on a worn datapad. "Surveillance confirms encrypted transmissions from her room. Potential threat to Supreme Leader's plans."

Rico flexed his beak, producing a silenced dart pistol. Private clutched a set of lockpicks with trembling flippers but steady hands.

"Operation Eclipse begins," Skipper declared.

Silent as shadows, the team infiltrated the Rentoplex. The creak of rusted stairs was muffled by careful footfalls and precision timing. Jane was alone, reviewing blueprints of network nodes and server schematics sprawled across a rickety table.

A soft click. The penguins emerged from the darkness, weapons drawn but poised.

Jane's eyes widened but did not panic. Instead, her gaze sharpened. "I assume you're not here to arrest me."

Skipper stepped forward. "Not quite. We need answers. Kim Jong Un's regime is planning something catastrophic. We believe you hold pieces of the puzzle."

Jane folded her arms. "And you're penguins."

"We're more than that," Kowalski said. "We're the resistance."

The interrogation was terse. Jane revealed the scope of her plan: safe, free internet access across the city, a threat to the regime's surveillance state. The penguins shared their intel on *Phase Borealis*—the atmospheric weapon poised to obliterate dissent.

Their goals aligned, their methods differed.

“I want to build a network that frees the people,” Jane said. “You want to dismantle the regime by force.”

Skipper nodded. “Different paths to the same summit.”

Jane paused. “Then we work together.”

As dawn crept through the cracked windows, a fragile alliance was forged. The penguins would protect Jane’s network, providing stealth and strategic strikes. Jane and John’s *Rento Fortune* would serve as a base—a beacon for hope and rebellion.

Skipper extended a flipper. Jane grasped it firmly.

“Operation Eclipse is now a coalition,” Skipper said. “For the future.”

Outside, the city awoke, unaware that in its shadows, forces of change had united.

Chapter 7

The church was a ruined cathedral near the edge of the city, its stained glass shattered, but its pillars still standing strong against the cold sky. Inside, John and Jane stood before a sparse gathering of friends and allies — the cracked but determined souls who had fought beside them.

John’s hands trembled slightly as he took Jane’s. Her green eyes shone with quiet defiance.

“I promise to build a future where hope is stronger than fear,” John whispered.

Jane smiled, steady and bright. “And I promise to be the light in the dark, the network in the silence.”

Their vows were simple words, but the weight behind them made the cathedral walls almost hum.

Outside, the city was alive with whispered rumors and muted cheers. The Rentoplex hosted the afterparty — a rare moment of joy amid decay. Bottles passed, songs were sung, and laughter rippled through the crooked halls.

Skipper, Kowalski, Rico, and Private huddled in a corner, their feathers slightly ruffled but their focus sharp.

“The space castle,” Skipper said, voice low, “is our priority. Satellite intel suggests it’s orbiting in a highly classified zone. Kim Jong Un’s last bastion.”

Kowalski’s fingers tapped across a holographic map projected from his wrist. “If we can find its trajectory and timing, we can intercept or sabotage.”

Rico produced a small rocket launcher, eyeing it fondly.

Private whispered, “Will it end the war?”

Skipper didn’t answer.

Meanwhile, the party raged on.

Timmy Monopoly, glasses fogged and cheeks flushed, excused himself from the crowd. Slipping into a shadowed room upstairs, he pulled out a small device and tapped the screen.

“Freakbob?” he murmured, initiating the video call.

The screen flickered and then came to life.

On the other end was **Spongebob Squarepants** — cheerful, and bright-eyed. His square pants and perpetually smiling face filled the frame.

“Timmy! Long time no sea!” Spongebob’s voice bubbled, perfectly earnest.

Timmy grinned. “Freakbob, it’s almost time. John’s wedding is tonight, but the real game is just beginning.”

Spongebob nodded solemnly. “Aye aye, captain. Ready to flip the world upside down.”

Their conversation was brief, full of coded phrases and cryptic plans.

Back downstairs, the revelers continued unaware. No one questioned Timmy’s absence. No one questioned the existence of a talking sponge who lived in a pineapple under the sea.

The night folded over Magnitogorsk like a dark blanket, thick with promises, secrets, and shifting tides.

Chapter 8

The Vatican was not a place of worship, not here. In Magnitogorsk, *The Vatican* was a stone-gray archive fortress buried beneath administrative towers. A vault of documents, lies, leverage — the weight of Russia's political soul packed into thick folders and twisted microfilm.

Today, it went to auction.

Timmy Monopoly stood tall in a pressed black coat, lips tight, fingers steepled. His eyes followed John from across the marble lobby, two wolves in a cage of wolves.

John wore his usual patched jacket, but his presence had changed. He walked like a man with purpose. A man with land. With *power*.

They didn't speak. They didn't need to. The rivalry was understood.

Jane sat quietly behind John, hands folded in her lap, her expression unreadable.

Above them all — far above — a man stared from orbit.

In his **space castle**, Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un sat in a throne that pulsed with soft blue light. The walls around him flickered with satellite feeds: missile silos, power grids, weather patterns — and now, zoomed in tight, a camera feed of John Rento's hotels.

He tapped his chin.

"He's growing," Kim muttered. "Too fast. Too bold."

A woman in a silver military suit approached him. "Shall we deploy Project Snowfall?"

Kim shook his head. "Not yet. Let them believe. Then crush them beneath it."

He pressed a button, zooming in further. There was Jane — laughing softly at something John whispered.

"And her," Kim whispered. "She's the real threat."

Back in the city, the auction began.

Timmy bid first. “One thousand rubles,” he said, voice calm, smooth.

John followed. “Eleven hundred.”

The numbers climbed quickly. The audience murmured. Both men pushed their entire fortunes into the fire.

Timmy’s brow furrowed slightly. “Four thousand.”

A pause. John exhaled. “Four thousand, three hundred.”

Jane touched his arm.

“No more,” she whispered. “We’ll have nothing left.”

John looked at her, eyes clouded — then raised his hand. “Four thousand, four hundred and one.”

Silence.

The judge banged his gavel.

“Sold to John Rento.”

The moment shattered.

Doors slammed open.

Two figures entered — distorted by flickering light, but unmistakable.

Rick and Morty.

Rick’s coat was soaked in oil and radiation. Morty trembled behind him, holding a gun like a dead animal.

Timmy stepped forward, eyes cold. “I told you it wasn’t over.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Rick drawled, raising a weapon pulsing with unknown energy. “Capitalism, betrayal, auction houses — classic setup. Time to blow it up.”

John stood, stunned. “Timmy… why?”

“You never saw the world for what it *could* be,” Timmy said. “You just wanted your name on buildings. I want history.”

Jane reached into her coat, already moving. “John—get behind me.”

Then came the sirens.

The Russian Police crashed through skylights and stairwells, automatic rifles raised. The State had been watching. The auction, the bidders, the hotel, the whispers. And now it saw too much.

A voice over a megaphone boomed: **“All of you — down! You’re under arrest for treason against the People’s State!”**

The moment snapped.

Rick fired first — a searing bolt of blue that struck a wall and vaporized half a window.

Police opened fire.

Jane pulled a gun from her belt.

Skipper shouted from the back row: “Go loud, boys!”

Kowalski and Rico leapt from behind the stage, returning fire. Private dove to shield the clerk. Smoke exploded across the marble floor.

John fell to his knees, breath knocked out by a grazing shot across his ribs. Blood spilled, warm and dark.

“*Timmy*...” he choked. “You were my friend.”

Timmy hesitated — just for a second. Then aimed again.

A figure rose beside John — ragged, barefoot, wearing a torn trenchcoat and a rusted spoon as a belt buckle.

The man didn’t speak.

But he pulled John to his feet with surprising strength.

“Who—?” John started.

“I’m Jaiden,” the man rasped. “I was in room six.”

Gunfire shattered the wall behind them.

The three-way shootout had begun:

- **Timmy, Rick, and Morty**, fighting for the future they envisioned.
- **The Russian Police**, defending a crumbling order.
- **John, Jane, the Penguins… and Jaiden**, fighting for freedom.

And above it all, from a throne in space, Kim Jong Un watched the fire ignite.

Chapter 9

It was always silent in orbit.

Space wrapped around the **Celestial Sovereign** — Kim Jong Un's orbital fortress — like a velvet glove. Stars glinted like gunmetal in the distance. The Earth spun below, unaware of the eyes watching.

Kim stood at the apex dome, hands clasped behind his back. The Earth's curve glowed faintly in the glass reflection, casting him in pale blue.

He had not slept in three days.

A silent aide approached. "Sir. The Vatican auction has concluded."

Kim didn't turn. "Yes," he said. "I watched."

"He won."

"Of course he did."

Kim raised a glass of rice liquor to his lips and sipped. It tasted like ash. "John Rento is reckless. A fool with charm. But fools make excellent weapons if they don't know they're loaded."

The aide shifted uneasily.

"We've intercepted encrypted chatter," she said. "The Penguins have allied with Jane."

Kim's hand trembled. Just slightly.

"They found each other," he muttered. "Intelligence converging on chaos. This is accelerating."

He turned from the window.

Behind him stretched a massive command chamber: black floors, glowing servers, holomaps of the globe spinning midair. Twelve generals sat in a perfect circle around a central platform — silent, waiting.

“Gentlemen,” Kim said, “the world is unraveling. Piece by piece. The Internet is slipping from our control. The Vatican is lost. And now...”

He gestured, and the lights dimmed. The holomap flickered.

A holographic model of **John’s hotel** — towering, shining — materialized.

“This structure,” Kim growled, “is not just wood and glass. It is an *ideology*. A place where information is free, where guests choose their names, where the economy rewards innovation instead of obedience.”

He walked slowly, circling the table.

“I did not conquer the peninsula to watch my nation rot in irrelevance. We will not be outplayed by a utility worker and a woman who calls herself... *Jane Google*.”

A general spoke. “Sir, we could jam the network. Cut off their VPNs.”

“Not enough,” Kim said. “VPNs are slippery. Surfshark especially. I’ve tried it. Too stable.”

He sipped again. “We must destroy the symbol.”

Silence.

Then Kim said the words:

“*Prepare the warhead.*”

Gasps.

A red button emerged from the table’s center, encased in glass.

One general stood. “Leader... nuking a civilian hotel may spark global retaliation. Sanctions. War.”

Kim nodded solemnly. “Yes. That is why we have a failsafe.”

He tapped a console. The lights dimmed further.

From the floor rose a containment chamber — sealed in cryo-steel, glowing faintly with containment runes and biometric locks.

Inside, curled in fetal slumber, was a monstrous animatronic bear.

Its eyes flickered.

Freddy Fazbear.

The generals recoiled.

“You said we would never open *that* chamber,” one whispered. “You said it was... unstable.”

“I did,” Kim replied. “And I meant it. Freddy is not a weapon. He is a message. A final truth.”

He touched the glass. “If the nuke fails, if the Penguins get too close, if Jane uploads the protocol to global servers... then we send *him*.”

A slow whirr echoed from inside the chamber as Freddy’s eyes tracked Kim’s hand. A single piano note played from within the containment.

Ding.

Kim turned to the others.

“We’re not fighting men anymore,” he said. “We’re fighting *symbols*. Let’s show them what *fear* really is.”

Chapter 10

The sky was red.

Sirens howled across the skyline of New Moscow as the first RPG ripped through the stained-glass atrium of John Rento's hotel. Shards rained down like holy daggers. The front desk caught fire first.

John hit the floor, dragging Jane by the waist as bullets pinged off the marble columns. Behind them, Skipper was barking orders in short, clipped code — his wing pressed to his radio.

"Kowalski! Flank left! Private, eyes on the stairs!"

"We're surrounded!"

From the balcony above, Rick burped loudly and opened fire with a plasma rifle.

"Morty, I told you this was a bad idea," he said between bursts. "These guys *shoot back*!"

"R-Rick, they have penguins, man! They have *penguins with military tactics!*"

"Just aim, you idiot!"

Below, a dozen Russian officers collapsed in a spray of arterial mist. One cop's jaw flew ten feet before slapping against a vending machine. Another's ribcage shattered like porcelain as Timmy Monopoly stomped through the doorway, wielding a matte-black RPG.

"Playtime's over," he said, grinning with soot on his face.

Rico charged.

He came in from the side — a blur of feathers and fury, flinging knives and spitting fire. Literally. His beak ejected a homemade flamethrower that torched Rick's leg, igniting his lab coat.

Morty screamed as Rick stumbled back, melting.

"Wait—wait—no—AAARGH—MORTY—MORTY I CAN SEE MY OWN SPINE—"

The portal gun clattered to the floor. Morty reached for it—only for Rico to headbutt him across the face, beak-first. A tooth flew out.

"I surrender!" Morty cried.

Timmy didn't care.

He fired the RPG.

Rico had just enough time to turn and smile.

Then the explosion ripped through the lobby.

Rico's body disintegrated into feathers, blood, and steel. His stomach landed in the hotel gift shop. A single feather drifted into Jane's lap.

Private screamed.

"RICO—!"

Jane struggled to stand, clutching her bleeding side.

"Get her!" Timmy shouted.

He leapt over the railing, landing with perfect balance. His coat was slick with soot and blood — someone else's. He aimed his pistol.

"You *really* thought free internet would save the world?" he sneered. "You thought kindness would beat capital?"

Jane coughed. Her lip bled. "I thought you'd just be my husband's friend."

"Wrong again."

He cocked the gun.

And then the **wall exploded.**

Jaiden entered.

No shoes. No shirt. Just dirt, muscle, and a rusted sledgehammer clutched in shaking hands.

He roared like something feral. And swung.

The first hit shattered Timmy's left shin. Bone jutted out like white lightning. He screamed — but before he could fall, Jaiden caught him by the throat.

Second swing: ribcage. Cracked like wood.

Third swing: his head.

And it did not stop. **Jaiden wailed on Timmy's skull until it no longer resembled a human shape** — just pulp and brain and wet slapping noises.

Blood soaked the floor. Even the Penguins looked away.

Jane passed out.

The smoke settled.

Spongebob stood silently by the bar, drink in hand.

He nodded at Jaiden.

Then vanished.

No one saw him leave. No one asked.

John dropped beside Jane, tears in his eyes.

"Skipper, help me!"

"We need compression," said Kowalski. "Private, hand me those gauze rolls."

"She'll live," Skipper said, pressing a wing to John's shoulder. "But not if you keep panicking."

John looked down at her.

Her breathing was shallow. But steady.

"Rico died for this," Private whispered. "He didn't deserve—"

“He was born for this,” Skipper said softly. “He *wanted* this. Died with honor.”

Kowalski looked up. “We can save her. But we’ve gotta move.”

They stood.

The flames had reached the rooftop garden.

John turned, just in time to see the **first hotel explode.**

The blast ripped upward like a mushroom cloud. Guests who hadn’t evacuated in time were vaporized. The pool launched into the air like a bowl of glass soup. The ground trembled.

Jaiden shielded Jane with his body.

John stared, breathless.

The building next door — **Hotel Rento #2** — was untouched.

Not a window cracked.

He clenched his fist.

From somewhere in his mind — deep and primal — a lyric floated into focus:

"In the darkness, the eyes of death are watching."

He didn’t know where it came from. But he believed it.

He had just survived Hell.

And Hell was only the beginning.

Chapter 11

The smoke had barely cleared, but the cold truth was unmistakable. The first hotel, John's first dream, was no more than a smoldering ruin. It lay like a broken monument to hope and loss, its once-proud walls collapsed into heaps of charred timber and twisted metal.

John moved through the wreckage with a heavy heart, his hands trembling as he helped salvage whatever could be saved. The weight of grief pressed down on him—not just for the destroyed property, but for Rico, the fallen penguin whose sacrifice still echoed painfully in every corner.

In the days that followed, the survivors found refuge in the second hotel. Though spared from destruction, it bore the scars of battle—the bullet holes in the walls, the shattered glass patched with thin sheets of plastic, and the lingering scent of smoke.

Jane lay in the dim hospital room on the top floor, her breathing slow but steady. The wound in her side was deep, and the doctors warned that her recovery would be long and arduous. John sat by her bedside, holding her hand, whispering promises he barely believed he could keep.

The penguins, meanwhile, were solemn. Skipper stood watch over Rico's empty place at the table, his feathers ruffled with grief. Kowalski meticulously cataloged the fallen comrade's gear, as if preserving a ghost. Private refused to speak, his eyes haunted by memories too sharp for words.

Jaiden kept to himself mostly, but in the quiet hours of the night, he could be found tuning a battered old guitar in the basement. The notes were rough but charged with a raw, desperate energy. He had formed a band — **Booned Cocks** — a name meant to shock, to defy, to declare rebellion in a world ruled by silence and surveillance.

"Music is a weapon," Jaiden said once, voice low and fierce. "If words can be censored, maybe sound can't. Maybe it can pierce the armor."

John watched from the doorway, admiring the fierce spark in the homeless man's eyes, the same fire that had saved him just days ago.

One night, after another long day of organizing repairs and nursing Jane back to health, John sat alone in the hotel's cramped office. The soft hum of the computer was a fragile comfort.

His fingers hovered over the keyboard, unsure. Then he opened a new tab.

The screen blinked.

No website loaded.

Just four words, stark and urgent:

GO TO CHINA

His pulse quickened.

Before he could react, a sharp pull gripped his chest. The world around him blurred, colors bleeding into streaks of light and shadow.

Then silence.

John opened his eyes.

He was no longer in the cold hotel office. The air was thick with the scent of red dust and burnt incense. The towering skyline of **China** stretched above him—streets bustling despite the late hour, neon signs flickering in strange characters.

A shadowy figure stepped forward, a gun pressed to his back.

"You pay four thousand rubles. Now," the man said in heavily accented Russian.

John swallowed hard. This was the red property he had dreamed of for so long.

He reached for his wallet, heart pounding.

The game was far from over.

Chapter 12

John’s heart pounded—not from fear, but from cold resolve. The gun pressed into his back was heavy with threat, but the spark inside him had ignited into something far fiercer. This was not the man who had arrived timidly in China days ago.

As the shadowy figure demanded the four thousand rubles, John acted without hesitation. His hand darted to a concealed blade beneath his coat. The move was swift, silent, brutal. A sharp cut across a throat, a muffled gasp, a crash as the body hit the ground. The second man turned—too slow. John met his eyes, hard and merciless. The struggle was brief. Blood pooled at their feet.

When the last threat fell, John breathed in deeply, the scent of iron thick in the air. There was no remorse. Only purpose.

With the guards neutralized, John completed the transaction. The red properties—Qatar and China—were finally his.

And with them came power.

He returned to the city with fire in his step. The second hotel had barely recovered from the last battle, but John saw beyond walls and bricks. He envisioned a sprawling empire of hundreds of hotels, each a bastion of freedom, resilience, and hope.

Laborers and friends rallied to his cause. Nights blurred into days as construction surged forward, buildings rising like monuments to the Rento name. Neon signs adorned every corner, painted in bold red and blue.

John stood atop a half-finished tower overlooking his domain, the city spread beneath him like a living map.

“*Rento Fortune!*” he shouted into the cold wind, voice raw with triumph.

Far away from the smog and the struggle, in a quietly opulent office bathed in sunlight and calm, a different figure sat reading a report on the escalating conflicts.

Cam Jing Bun—the younger brother of Kim Jong Un—wore a gentle smile. His eyes held warmth and understanding, the kind that few expected from the bloodline.

“Peace is always possible,” Cam said softly to himself, fingers tracing the rim of a tea cup. “Even when the world seems lost.”

The game had changed.

And somewhere, in the shadows of power and rebellion, new moves were being planned.

Chapter 13

The night sky was black as ink, pierced by stars and distant thunder. Above the Earth, the **Celestial Sovereign** — Kim Jong Un's orbital fortress — drifted like a dark monolith, a prison of steel and shadows.

Inside, a desperate alliance prepared for the final assault.

John, Jane, Jaiden, and the penguins gathered in the command room, weapons primed, hearts steeled. Cam Jing Bun had joined them, his calm presence a balm against the storm.

John looked at the motley group. "This ends tonight."

Jane nodded, fingers tightening around a sleek laptop glowing with encrypted code.

"We bring down the regime — for good."

Their plan was simple but deadly.

Jaiden's band, **Booned Cocks**, had broadcast encrypted transmissions throughout the fortress's communication network, sowing chaos. The eerie notes of their rebellious music echoed through vents and cables, disrupting security systems.

Suddenly, the walls pulsed as a chilling mechanical whirr announced the deployment of **Freddy Fazbear**. The monstrous animatronic lumbered through the halls, eyes glowing red, metal jaws snapping with terrifying power.

Skipper barked orders as they moved through the fortress's labyrinthine corridors. Private, eyes wide but unwavering, stayed close, feathers bristling.

They found Jane's room first. As they breached the door, a chilling presence filled the air.

From the shadows emerged **Timmy Monopoly** — no longer fully alive, now a terrifying hybrid of zombie, ghost, and cybernetic enhancements, limbs crackling with electricity and unnatural force.

"Thought you could kill me?" His voice was a guttural rasp, distorted by the machines fused to his body. "I'm eternal. The Monopoly Man."

The fight exploded instantly. Timmy lunged with metallic claws; Jane dodged, weaving Surfshark's encrypted digital shield around her. Jaiden's guitar shattered Timmy's arm with a heavy chord, but the creature retaliated, tearing through Jaiden's shirt with unnatural strength.

Skipper commanded the penguins, their sleek weapons slicing through mechanical guards as they defended their friends.

The battle raged upward through the fortress, culminating at Kim's throne room.

There, Kim Jong Un awaited — calm, cruel, and inhuman. As John, Jane, Cam, Jaiden, and the penguins burst in, Kim activated a hidden control.

The room shook as a colossal **mech** unfolded around him, towering and armed with energy cannons and steel fists.

"I am the ultimate power," Kim growled. "And you will bow."

The final battle began — brutal, savage, and merciless.

John's rifle cracked, spraying lead into the mech's joints. Jane hacked the control panels, sending pulses of static through its systems. Cam wielded a plasma blade, slicing steel limbs.

Jaiden hurled a fiery explosive chord, breaking servos and sparking fires.

But the mech's fury was overwhelming.

One by one, allies fell.

The hotel's survivors—workers, friends, guests—rushed in, fighting with whatever they could wield. Blood sprayed, bones shattered, screams echoed.

Private dove beneath the mech's footfalls, clutching a satchel of explosives.

"Go!" Skipper yelled.

With a final, desperate flap of his wings, Private detonated the charge.

The explosion engulfed the room.

Silence.

Smoke choked the air.

As the dust settled, John, Jane, and Skipper were the only ones left standing.

But Kim was not finished.

From the rubble, his voice echoed — distorted and monstrous.

Suddenly, the mech's cockpit burst open.

Kim emerged, bloodied but alive.

He roared and lunged with a monstrous blade, tearing through Jaiden's last stand and catching Jane off-guard.

Jane collapsed, her Surfshark shield flickering.

John charged, screaming.

Skipper leapt, distracting Kim's deadly strike.

In a final, desperate act, Jane summoned every ounce of encrypted power from Surfshark's network — a blazing torrent of light and code.

The mech screamed, systems frying, circuits exploding.

Kim's roar turned to a shriek as the digital storm consumed him.

The mech exploded into a fiery inferno.

Silence.

John and Jane, battered and bleeding, lay among the ruins.

Months later, Timmy Monopoly rose again—no longer a monster, but a man reborn in shadow and power.

He seized control, consolidating authority with ruthless cunning.

The world whispered his new name: **The Monopoly Man**.

John and Jane vanished from the world's stage.

They settled in a remote cabin buried beneath endless Arctic ice—far from empire, war, and ambition.

Together, they built a quiet life—where no one would find them.

But the echoes of their fight, the price paid in blood, lingered still in every frozen wind.

Epilogue

The Arctic wind howled relentlessly over the frozen tundra, a white veil stretching beyond the horizon. Nestled between jagged peaks of ice and snow, a solitary cabin stood weather-beaten and quiet, its windows frosted with the breath of winter.

Inside, John and Jane sat by the flickering fire, wrapped in thick blankets. The scars they bore were fading, but the weight of the past lingered in their eyes.

A soft knock echoed from the door.

John rose cautiously, opening it to reveal a familiar figure cloaked in darkness.

It was **Skipper**, the last remaining penguin.

Behind him, a tall, rugged man stepped forward — **Jaiden**, bearing his guitar slung over his back and a wary smile.

Skipper's gaze met John's.

"We're still here," he said simply. "The others… scattered. Hiding across the globe."

Jaiden nodded. "We've been watching, waiting. The world is restless."

Jane's eyes brightened faintly.

John's jaw tightened.

"The fight isn't over," Skipper continued. "Not by a long shot."

The fire crackled, casting long shadows.

Outside, beneath the shimmering aurora, unseen eyes stirred in the darkness.

The game was just beginning again.